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ABSTRACT

One strategy that can provide immediate results in improving African American kindergarten students' success in school is improving attendance. This study examined the effect of school attendance on African American kindergarten students' learning readiness. Thirty kindergarten students in three classrooms at one Chicago school completed the Metropolitan Readiness Test. After Pearson Product-Moment Coefficients were determined, the results suggested a correlation between classroom attendance and students' readiness. Based on the findings, recommendations include reminding administrators and staff of the correlation between attendance and student readiness, and holding parents accountable for unexcused and/or excessive absences. (Contains 12 references.) (JPB)

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CORRELATION BETWEEN ATTENDANCE AND SCHOOL READINESS OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

Shirley Whitker

School readiness is a complex issue which has recently commanded national attention. African American children's readiness for school is influenced by several complex factors. One in particular is attendance and is why African American children appear to be more at risk for school failure. We must examine the role that schools play in that failure. (Swick, 1993)

Strategies to reduce the risks of failure must be strengthened if African American children are to receive the needed resources they require for school success. At the core of this success seems to be improving attendance. Of course, other factors are of equal or greater importance such as equal funding, knowledge of learning styles, sensitivity to cultural differences, racism, nutrition, parent involvement, and more. Improved attendance, however, seems to be an area that can provide immediate results in improving kindergarten students' readiness and success in school.

Attendance is a crucial factor in the systematic professional education of a child. If a school system and, more precisely, teachers are expected to be accountable to teach a child a specific course of information, it becomes imperative that the child be present to receive instruction. School attendance is mandatory in most states within a certain age group. Parents are expected to see that their children attend school on a regular basis.

According to Kube and Ratigan (1992):

> Schools should develop and implement a comprehensive attendance policy that encourages students to have good attendance. School principals play the key role in improving student attendance. They must first recognize and promote the idea that by improving attendance the school also improves student and teacher attitudes, student achievement, and teacher productivity and creates an environment more conducive to learning....improving student attendance has a positive effect upon teaching and learning (p. 348).

Several studies have shown a link between attendance and achievement. That link also is evident in good attendance and school readiniess of kindergarten students. Kube and Ratigan (1992) further stated that:

> Attendance policies must be reviewed annually with input from all parties involved - teachers, administrators, students, attendance clerks, school nurse, parents, and board of education (p. 348).

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It seems a simple concept: the more often a student attends school, the more he is able to be taught and the more he will learn. Learning is a continuous process. Learning is built on previous stimuli received. Students must have good attendance to be better able to reach their absolute full potential. Greer (1992) stated that each year, teachers and administrators are challenged to develop an attendance improvement plan for the school. Still, attendance percentages continue to drop. Instruction time lost due to student absenteeism is difficult to regain and time taken to repeat instruction for the previous day's absentees is substantial.

Greer added that 15-20 per cent of students fail to attend school regularly. Perhaps parents should be compelled to send their children to school regularly just as inmates at a correctional school were forced to attend classes regularly which improved student achievement. (Fahsholtz,1993) But more importantly, students should be encouraged, motivated, challenged, and rewarded for perfect attendance and good attendance. Smerka (1992) discussed a program that actually increased their perfect attendance rate to make it the highest in that school district.

Attendance is important fo facilitate kindergarten readiness. However, the Chicago Board of Education eliminated truant officers from the system. The burden is now on teachers and administration to improve attendance by whatever means are at their disposal. The research seems to indicate that there is a correlation between attendance and academic achievement and school readiness.

PROCEDURES:

Population / Sample

The population for this study includes three kindergarten classrooms at a Chicago Public School. The school has an all-day kindergarten program. Ninety per cent of the students receive free lunch. Eighty - five per cent of the students come from single family homes and seventy per cent of the students live in CHA high-rise housing developments. Ninety-nine per cent of the students are African American.

From the 81 enrolled kindergarten students in the three rooms, a sample of 10 students was randomly selected from each of these three rooms for a total of 30 students.

Each May all kindergarten students are administered the Metropolitan Readiness Test. Tests are individually hand-scored. The sub-test scores were recorded and a composite score total of all sub-tests was recorded. Attendance records were used to obtain total days present for each student.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient was employed to determine if there was a statistical significant correlation between attendance and the school readiness of kindergarten students.

The data in Table 1 indicates a significant .001 correlation between attendance and the school readiness of kindergarten children. The calculated value of "r" is .78. The significant value of "r" at the .05 level of confidence is .3494. The level of confidence at the .01 level is .4487; and the .001 level is .5541. Hence, the results of the study show a significant correlation at not only the .05 level, but also at the .01 and .001 levels of confidence.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis of a correlation between attendance and kindergarten readiness is accepted. The results show that students with consistent, good attendance tend to achieve at higher levels in school readiness. Kube and Ratigan (1992) found that every day a student misses from school is the equivalent of two days missed. The student not only misses he concepts taught on one day, but also will have difficulty grasping the extension of the concepts introduced the following day. Each school and / or district must design, implement, and evaluate a plan to improve and sustain good attendance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Administration, teachers, and staff should be reminded of the importance and correlation between attendance and achievement and encourage their students to make perfect attendance a goal.
2. Parents should be held accountable for unexcused and excessive absences.
3. Each school and school district should devise and evaluate an annual plan to improve student attendance. Administration, teachers, staff, parents, and students should have input in this plan. The plan should include motiviation techniques, reprimands and consequences, and rewards. A school staff member (s) should be designated to implement the plan.
4. Additional research needs to be done to determine if attendance has a different effect on the school readiness of boys and girls.

Table 1

Peerson's Product - Moment Correlation
For Attendance and School Readiness
Of Kindergarten Students

STATISTIC	VALUE
NO. OF PAIRS OF SCORES	30
SUM OF SCORES ON 'X'	342
SUM OF SCORES ON 'Y'	1994
SUM OF SQUARED SCORES ON 'X'	2525.2
SUM OF SQUARED SCORES ON 'Y'	3042.44
MEAN OF 'X' SCORES	11.4
MEAN OF 'Y' SCORES	66.47
SUM OF 'X' x 'Y'	2158.52
PEARSON'S r	.78*
DEGREES OF FREEDOM	28

* Significant at the .05 level of confidence

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